



THE ANU OBSERVER

General Meeting 2021-10-21

Agenda

Location: ANU Observer Zoom

Time: 1800

Held until resolution of Item 3

Item 1: Meeting Opens and Apologies

- 1.1 Acknowledgement of Country
Delivered by Konstantine.
- 1.2 Apologies: None received.

Item 2: Minutes from the Previous Meeting including Matters Arising

- 2.1 Minutes from the Previous Meeting
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Myjn6XG5iMKzKF_RVdtZ_-0VYZx3OkMI/edit?usp=sharing&oid=103038097703349829566&rtpof=true&sd=true
Passes

Angus moves a procedural motion to deal with Item 5. Passes with majority.

Item 3: Reports and Matters Arising

*Keeley to move a procedural motion to move all reports en bloc
Motion passes with majority - 7 Against*

- 3.1 Report of the Chair of the Board (Appendix A)
Konstantine talking a little bit about his experience.
Michael: Good job.
- 3.2 Report of the Chair of the Editorial Committee (Appendix B)
Taken as read.
Shoutout to James.
- 3.3 Report of the Visual Team (Appendix C)
Taken as read.
Shoutout to the Visual Team.
- 3.4 Report of the Web Executive (Appendix D)
Taken as read.
- 3.5 Report of the Community Executive (Appendix E)
Taken as read.
- 3.6 Secretary's Report (Appendix F)
Work on policies/regulation - smoother handover to secretary but won't have time to do all - apologies.
Chief operating officer policies - directing about what to do/limitations.
- 3.7 Finance Executive's Report (Appendix G)
Taken as read.

Moved by Alex.
All reports passed.

Item 4: Elections

Candidate statements can be viewed here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ThkVabzRKxwJGQuEIkQjG7M2XTf2TsCojKqpfNpMMiE/edit?usp=sharing>

Returning Officer: Roxanne Missingham

Elections - chaired returning officer roxanne

Speak first? Yes

Speakers - election: editors

Declan

Nathan (focus on breaking news, training)

Alex

Ali

Keeley

Questions (michael): if not elected? What is contribution going forward? Long term commitment?

keely - stay on as reporter/whatever capacity

Ali- stay on in whatever capacity

Alex- stay on in whatever capacity

Nathan - keep on observer

Declan- stay on as reporter/continue investigative work

Question: sung jae lee to keeley: absence?

Keeley- external forces - impossible to repeat - encouraged to stay on

Question (michael): volunteer organisation time constraints? If you had to drop current priorities? Which one?

Alex- focus on breaking news

Ali- relevant to student population

Keeley- coverage of events - breaking

Nathan- breaking pieces prioritise breaking news

Declan- value on investigative pieces

Result:

Editors Elected:

Declan

Nathan

Alex

Ali

Nathan withdraw from secretary position

Sasha elected as secretary

Elections Community exec.

Alex

Darlene

Speeches first

Alex- building community, focus on social engagement, mental health/first-aid training

Darlene- adding formal compliment, social accountability, increasing use of office space

Questions?

James: candidates providing free food?

Darlene/Alex: yes

Question- alex- another role - how you fit it in? Strategy?

Alex: work best under pressure, learnt to manage time

Results:

Elected Candidate: Darlene

Uncontested speakers

Sasha

Nick

Sung Jae

Chair passed to Konstantinos

Item 5: Items for Resolution

4.1 Appointment of Arbitration Panel Members. (3)

Nominations for Arbitration Panel Members are to be advertised by the Chair of the Board prior to the next General Meeting. Nominations will be received by the Chair in the period between the calling of a General Meeting and the opening of that Meeting.

No questions.

Moved by: Konstantine

Seconded: Angus

Motion passes

Item 6: Items for Discussion

Nil

Item 7: Notices of Motions

Nil

Item 8: Other Business

Item 9: Date of next meeting and Close

The next meeting of the Members of The ANU Observer will be held in Semester 1, 2022.

Meeting closes at 19:20.

Appendix A: Report of the Chair - Konstantinos Katsanis

This is going to be my last report as the Chair of this association. It is a little emotional, but also it is time to leave all this to someone new. Observer has been a great experience, one I am glad I got the opportunity to have, despite all the stress that came with it. It is definitely way more rewarding than what someone might think. I think what the best part was, was being part of it, even in a different capacity, from the start and seeing it change, evolving, and growing over time.

This year has been a rollercoaster for all of us. Covid changed the pace of how we operate, ceasing in-person meetings and making communication a little bit more difficult. In-particular, board meetings always work better in-person. What I found this year was that it is difficult for directors to tune in to meetings if they are either not particularly interested in the director's role, or if they do not know what they are doing. A disruption like Covid, in those cases, does not help at all. To make directors understand more about our governance, I thought to provide training to all of them in the beginning of the year, training that ANU failed to provide, even if they promised it. Being a director is as important as any other role, but I do not think it is clear to anyone interested in an executive role what their responsibilities as directors will be, ending up signing-up to something they did not know were getting into. My suggestion for Observer going forward would be that everyone would need to take an interest in understanding governance principles. Considering how small our size is, even non-executives could to some extent be educated on basic Observer governance, which I highly recommend the new board to do, e.g. 101 Governance for Reporters, etc.

Regarding external stakeholder relationships, we have maintained good relationships with all other student associations. I was glad to see our relationship with Woroni improving. I was glad that all associations expressed an interest to improve the SSAF process in a more proactive and collaborative manner. Our relationship with ANU has been stable. However, communication can be improved. I was hopeful that we would be working closer together to improve the SSAF process, but they themselves have failed to follow part of their requirements as per the SSAF agreement. I was hopeful that the ANU Student Services Council would be ready by now, and would greatly improve the bidding process, and collaboration among student associations. However, this has not happened, yet. Neither we have been informed about how the SSAF process will look like. I raised my concerns with the DVCUE office, but I have not seen any change. It is not ideal, and I would recommend that if delays such as those occur next year, the next board should stay on top of it and hold ANU accountable for it.

Personally, I will admit that due to full-time employment in the second half of this year, I was unable to fulfill all of my duties as a Chair. I could have definitely done better. So, I apologise for that. I also apologise to those who found our board meetings boring. They are dry, but I could have been a more engaging public speaker. I am interested in receiving feedback because that feedback will also be incorporated in my handover that I will provide to the incoming Chair.

Appendix B: Report of the Executive Editor - Declan Milton

As we begin to round off the university year, the news team has continued to perform with some of our best content to date. I'm really happy with the focus and energy all the reporters and editors have put in after our busiest times of the year (ANUSA elections etc). For the first 12 days of October we were publishing an article a day, even despite campus being closed. The COVID lockdown has forced us to change the way we do things, which I believe will have an enduring effect. For instance, we have focused on longer-form articles, shoutout to James Day here who, for months has been working on a piece on Clubs Council, and has delivered a really significant investigative piece – something our readers, and I particularly value highly and want to push more towards as the holidays near.

We have exceeded our KPI over the past 3 months, and whilst output may not be the best determinant of success, I can assure the quality and standard of our articles has been of our highest level. Myself, and the rest of the editorial team will be treating these holidays as an opportunity, rather than a break, to pursue some longer-form pieces which we hope our readers will enjoy. I'm very proud that we have been able to substantially grow our readership as well, with hundreds of new followers coming through over the COVID period, showing that students appreciate our updates on campus.

Most of the team by the end of the year will have a year's worth of experience, which I know will bode well for *Observer* next year.

Appendix C: Visual Content Executive Report - Joseph Oh

Firstly I would like to thank the Observer Team for a great year, albeit the unforeseen circumstances in the second semester. I think everyone pulled their weight and tried to stay engaged which was great to see.

I took over the role of VCE very abruptly, and although the handover process was quite shaky, I managed to pick up the role without too much difficulty. I was pleased with the visual content output in semester one through the consistent fortnightly fives and interviews. It is also great that we established some reporting on the cultural aspects of the university through the art gallery video interviews.

Second semester was a big hit on the visual team, as we could not gather to create video content, despite the good news of Jun and Mady joining the team. I did manage to introduce them to Canva, and they have put in some good work in the semester. This type of dynamic is an improvement from last year, as we have team members now that I can train. I am excited to teach them videography and photography, so we have a strong foundation for next year's content.

I have worked on the Observer merchandise, and I plan to get those ready before market day next year, and I also will purchase some new equipment to make video interviewing easier, such as a hand-held microphone. I am excited for our team to grow even more, and I plan to stay as VCE next year.

For the future aspirations and goals for the visual team, I hope to:

1. Get new members on board.

2. Make Fortnightly Five more entertaining, rather than purely having news recaps. (Maybe even a rebrand of the series).
3. Continue to make visual content on the cultural aspects of campus.
4. Make content more interactive and 'real' so it portrays what ANU is actually like (more relatable content). Eg. Have more interviews with students in different settings.
5. Continue to create professional graphics.
6. Occasionally make long projects that are produced with high-quality (eg. Documentaries).

I am still unsure about how to utilize our social media, as Facebook is obviously the most interactive platform, and Instagram can get a bit personal. But it will be interesting to brainstorm with team members to figure out how to utilize the personal aspect of Instagram to portray Observer as an accessible and inclusive organization. I don't think twitter is too valuable to us, purely because I rarely see students talking about twitter, and there just simply isn't anything to tweet about other than reposting articles.

Appendix D: Web Executive Report - Angus Brooks

This semester has seen a number of backend improvements made to the Observer site to address site performance challenges and reduce downtime, which has been a problem for a while. These changes appear to be working well, but is still a work in progress.

Observer continues to be heavily reliant on Facebook for web traffic. This became a bit of a crisis this year when our page was removed by Facebook in response to proposed legislative changes in Australia. Whilst the page was restored, it highlights the need for Observer to have other ways of distribution. We've been experimenting this year with platforms such as Mail Chimp to distribute content and news updates. This has gone well, and I think this is something we should do more frequently and to a more consistent schedule. This allows us to be less reliant on platforms such as Facebook, and also means we can send more targeted updates to the right people.

Appendix E: Community Executive Report - Angus Brooks

This is the first year that the role of Community Executive has existed. The role was introduced to assist with 'overhead' operational tasks and issues at Observer that don't fall to a specific team.

This semester started with an excellent Market Day that was a substantial improvement compared to Semester 1. We were able to talk to substantially more people and generate interest in the organisation. Our phone wallets were well received and it would be good to expand our merchandise offering in the future.

It was great to see our team using the office more and more until the ACT went into lockdown in mid August. I have been working with the University on a new lease for the office space, as we originally signed on to a two year contract. This is going well, and a new contract should be signed soon. Pleasingly,

the ANU provided Observer with significant additional financial support this year in terms of reduced office costs as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns.

Finally, the Observer team this year has been really fantastic. Recent discussions and surveys suggest that we will have a large number of team members continue with Observer next year which is really great. Overall, our team is happy with how things are going at Observer, and also have great feedback and suggestions for ways that the organisation can improve – such as meeting improvements, more whole team events/socials and more professional development opportunities. I look forward to working with the team and the board on ways this feedback can be integrated.

Appendix F: Secretary's Report - Konstantinos Katsanis

This is going to be my last report as the Secretary of this association. This role has been valuable and has taught me lots of things. Especially regarding policy writing. To whoever is interested in pursuing a policy field in their career, this is a good start. Observer is still a new organisation. Its policies and regulations, and even its constitution, as we saw from earlier this year, are constantly changing. There are always new ideas and new needs that need to be covered by rules.

This year, what I have mostly worked on has been the constitution. I was hoping to finish off more policies, but those have to wait until the end of exams. Working full-time took a lot of time away from me, and I will admit that I did not manage to commit to the role for the second half of the year as much as I should have. I am aiming to finish all mandatory regulations and policies by the end of my term. Unfortunately, those will need to be passed on in next year's OGM.

I was glad that I was able to provide governance advice to our officers throughout the year. Some people, not just in the exec, showed interest in understanding how Observer functions. However, it would have been even better if more people showed interest, and I think that is only possible if the Secretary provides some basic governance training to all officers at some point in the year. Obviously, the Secretary should also undertake the task of training all directors, if possible, in the beginning of their terms, especially if ANU is not going to provide that training.

As Secretary I ensured that we have a well-structured file of all of our documents. In the beginning of the year, I re-formatted the drive, and created a logical structure so that everyone can find what document they are interested in easily. The office also has physical copies of our constitution, regulations, and policies, as well as media-related books, and governance training materials, for everyone to access. I think having a digital and physical file is important.

Appendix G: Report of the Finance Executive - SungJae Lee

I would like to start my report by thanking everyone involved with observer. Despite all the challenges, I feel we had a great year.

The financial matters of Observer has been rather uneventful. Nonetheless, I encountered a few obstacles but none too big to have any negative impact or cause too much of a difficulty.

I will give a concise summary of what my role has consisted of this year.

- Track expenditure and maintain spending records
- Calculate allowances and adjustments for departing and incoming members
- Pay allowances and honoraria.
- Interact with PKF, the firm that handles our auditing
- Encourage healthy spending of our budget

One of the biggest challenges this year was perhaps our lack of spending. The pandemic resulted in less office use, less demand of equipment upgrades and unilodge generously discounting our rent meant that we have a large budget surplus. It will be one of my objectives to spend this surplus in a healthy and constructive manner. Other tasks I plan to complete before the end of my term are as follows:

- SSAF bid
- Adjust the budget for next year
- Consider how we can improve our metrics for news engagement

Here is an update of our budget and expenditure; correct as of 21/09/21:

ANU Observer Budget 2021					
Category	Budgeted	Proportion	Amount Spent \$	Remaining \$	Spent %
Allowances & Honoraria	\$31,000.00	57.27%	\$19,229.82	\$11,770.18	62.03%
Administration	\$305.00	0.56%	\$0.00	\$305.00	0.00%
Web Administration	\$940.00	1.74%	\$501.93	\$438.07	53.40%
Office Rent & Supplies	\$11,850.00	21.89%	\$439.85	\$11,410.15	3.71%
Auditing	\$2,500.00	4.62%	\$2,475.00	\$25.00	99.00%
Software	\$1,250.00	2.31%	\$660.77	\$589.23	52.86%
Legal/Contingency	\$3,000.00	5.54%	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	0.00%
News Subscriptions	\$200.00	0.37%	\$156.00	\$44.00	78.00%
MHFA Training	\$250.00	0.46%	\$0.00	\$250.00	0.00%
Meetings & Events	\$700.00	1.29%	\$500.73	\$199.27	71.53%
NUS National Conference	\$0.00	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00%
Equipment	\$925.00	1.71%	\$117.51	\$807.49	12.70%
Advertising & Merchandise	\$900.00	1.66%	\$183.00	\$717.00	20.33%
Phone	\$60.00	0.11%	\$0.00	\$60.00	0.00%
Freedom of Information Requests	\$250.00	0.46%	\$0.00	\$250.00	0.00%
Total	\$54,130.00		\$24,264.61	\$29,865.39	44.83%

As Observer expands and matures as an organization, I would like to see many improvements regarding the financial aspect of Observer.

Firstly, I think my handover process was not as rigorous as I would like. Although the Observer team were always there to help, I found myself lost with tasks that were overwhelming for a new Finance Executive. I will ensure my successor receives a very comprehensive handover process and I will not abruptly leave them to figure it out on their own.

Secondly, I would like to see an eventual amendment of allowance payment. The current calculation protocol means that editors get paid twice as much as the Finance Executive; in fact, the Finance Executive is the lowest paid position out of all board members. I understand that this role originally was intended to be much more passive, but evidently the position has evolved into more of an active role with lots of integral responsibilities. There can be a case made that every board member makes significant time contributions. This is not an attack on the editors or other positions; this is an attack on the fact that the calculation protocol is rigid and seems to be ignorant of the fact that at times I would work many hours beyond what other roles consist of.

Thank you everyone for a great year and I look forward to the challenges of 2022. I am sure 2022 will be another fantastic year for Observer and I have much faith in our editorial and reporting team.